

April 25, 2013

The Marion County Council held its regularly scheduled meeting and Strategic Plan Workshop on Thursday, April 25, 2013 at 5:00 P.M., at the Marion County Economic Development Office, Marion, South Carolina. Members present were Elista H. Smith, Chairperson; Buddy Collins, Vice Chairman; John Q. Atkinson, Jr., Thomas E. Shaw, and Milton W. Troy, II. Also present were G. Timothy Harper, Administrator; Kent M. Williams, Deputy Administrator; Charles L. McLain, III, County Attorney; Sabrina Davis, Clerk to Council; and Ogleretta White, Grant Coordinator. A representative from the Star & Enterprise was not present and duly notified.

Chairperson Smith called the meeting to order and asked Vice Chairman Collins to lead the Invocation, after which she welcomed visitors and read the Freedom of Information Announcement.

Motion was made by Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Atkinson, and carried unanimously, to approve as written, the minutes of the regular meeting held on April 9, 2013.

Vice Chairman Collins stated for the record that he had a written proxy from Councilman Simon Jenkins voting in favor of all matters.

Councilman John Q. Atkinson Jr., stated for the record that he had a written proxy from Councilman Allen W. Floyd voting in favor of all matters.

The County Attorney stated that second reading for the ordinance listed on the agenda as follows was ready: A. Second Reading of Ordinance #2013-02 An ordinance to

amend the Marion County Procurement Code to provide for an increase in local vendor options was ready:

The Administrator told Council that item A. on the agenda; Second Reading of Ordinance #2013-02 An ordinance to amend the Marion County Procurement Code to provide for an increase in local vendor options was ready: The Administrator read the ordinance. Motion was made by Mr. Atkinson, seconded by Mr. Collins, and carried unanimously, to approve second reading of Ordinance #2013-02.

The Administrator introduced Mr. Bill Tomes and Mrs. Adrienne Moody with the Institute for Public Service and Policy Research, University of South Carolina.

The Administrator turned the meeting over to the facilitators to update the Marion County Strategic Plan.

Under Vision Development

Mr. Tomes led Council through two visioning exercise to determine the desired future state of the County, to provide direction for the vision statement, and to determine the purpose of Marion County government, to provide direction for the mission statement.

Council members were asked what they would like to see and hear about the County if they should leave and come back in five years. They are as follows:

- County that has overcome the division of race geographic territory.
- Progressive
- Lots of good industry and jobs
- Most advanced education system in the state
- High graduation rates
- Improve education through more parental involvement
- People working together to make Marion County better
- Full employment
- Cultural recreation for all groups
- Adequate salaries; provide a good standard of living for all people
- More collaboration between municipalities and county
- Marion County will be a leader in job development and quality of life issues
- More opportunities for young professionals; retain young talent
- More affordable housing for senior citizens
- Increased cultural awareness
- Vibrant downtown areas that remain open seven days a week

Council also discussed the importance of including recreational activities in the vision statement.

The Proposed Revised Vision Statement

Vision: Marion County is a vibrant community where people want to live, work, and raise a family due to quality educational, employment, housing and diverse cultural and recreational opportunities that are available to all.

Under Mission Development

Council was asked to determine the purpose of Marion County Council, and describe what would happen if it does not exist.

- Provide leadership to make Marion County a good place to live, work, and play
- To enforce rules, laws, and regulations.
- To provide core government services to the citizens to provide adequate and safe infrastructure, fire rescue, police protection, and preserve and protect our natural resources.
- Good living environment for all citizens living in the County.
- Create policy to enhance the daily lives of the citizens.
- Provide needed services to the people in a cost effective way.
- Carry out mandates of state government without the funding from state government.
- The function of the County is to control spending, provide for the safety and well being of all citizens and those passing through.
- To provide the best workforce, jobs, diverse recreation, and diverse educational opportunities, good leadership, and a wonderful place to live.

If County government did not exist:

- The county would be unsafe.
- Certain quality of life, safety, and health needs would not be met.

After a brief discussion, Council reviewed the current mission statement to determine if it reflected the purpose of Marion County government as described above; Council stated that the current mission statement is accurate.

Mission: The mission of Marion County government is to provide quality public services while creating an environment that is conducive to enhancing the quality of life and job creation for all citizens.

Values

Council revisited the values statement currently in place and added the following to the list:

- Progressive – We are an organization that strives to be proactive, future-oriented and innovative

External Scan-PEST

Political

- Mandates
- Dilution of home rule
- Less government
- Tea Party- no new taxes
- Unwillingness to negotiate
- Upcoming elections- lack of courage to do the “right” thing because they want to stay in office
- Waste flow control legislature
- Underfunded local government fund
- Affordable Care Act
- Immigration
 - If law changes, could impact labor force
 - Currently impacts county services provided
- Storm water and air quality control

Economic

- Economic growth slow or at a standstill
- Collection rates are up compared to the past
 - Increased building inspections, permits
- Passed capital sales tax
- Decreased property values
- Insurance premiums increased
- Uncertainty in fuel and utility prices
- Increased spending on county supplies, insurance, etc.
- High unemployment rate; slowly decreasing
 - 17%
- Few new job creation opportunities coming soon

Societal/ Demographic

- Population decreased
- Aging population
- Young people are not returning
- Increase in social program dependence
- Illegal immigrant population static or slightly declining
- Increase in small businesses owned by immigrants
- Rural areas not growing

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- Lack of infrastructure in rural areas

- Racial and regional divisions among population

Technology

- Limited educational and training opportunities offered through technical school
- Perception that technical school is not as credible as other higher education institutions
- Internet access is not consistent throughout the county and is currently lacking in rural areas
 - New infrastructure is on the way
- Citizens want to pay bills online
 - Can currently only pay taxes online; other collections not currently possible
- No central information for all citizen-county related information
- New administration building will help streamline process and information sharing
- Potential upgrade to 911 communication system

Council also addressed their strengths and weaknesses.

The Administrator told Council that the ground breaking ceremony for Harbor Freight will be held on Wednesday, May 1st at 10:00 a.m.

The Administrator told Council that he presented 32 roads to the CTC. Mr. Harper stated that the County would receive \$250,000 for rocking.

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Mr. Troy, seconded by Mr. Shaw, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:55 P.M.

Elista H. Smith, Chairperson

Buddy Collins, Vice Chairman

John Q. Atkinson, Jr.

(absent)

Allen W. Floyd

(absent)

Simon Jenkins, Chaplain

Thomas E. Shaw

Milton W. Troy, II

G. Timothy Harper, Administrator

Charles L. McLain, III County Attorney

Sabrina Davis, Clerk to Council